

Course Name: Conservation Planning	
Course Coordinator: Sally Van Lieu	Course Number: MI0014

**Overview:** This course emphasizes the process of conservation planning, and is field oriented. It covers NRCS conservation planning and related policy, procedures and guidelines for carrying out the planning process, technical guidance, tools available to aid the planning process, and program guidance for plan implementation.

The full course consists of three parts:

- 1 – Background and Framework, self-paced
- 2 – Hands-on Application, classroom & field exercises
- 3 – Conservation Planning, On-the-job (develop a conservation plan, evaluate a conservation plan, revise a conservation plan)

Satisfactory completion of the full course includes the successful completion and evaluation of Part 3.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the course is to prepare the participant to be able to independently apply the NRCS planning process, and to utilize supporting technology, in order to assist customers in making decisions resulting in conservation plans that conserve, maintain and improve the resources and meet the customer's needs.

#### **Prerequisites:**

- Part 1 - Have the equivalent of one year or more experience in the field with conservation planning as a Soil Conservationist, Soil Conservation Technician or CD Technician and complete the following NEDC courses through AgLearn:
  1. Introduction to the Field Office Technical Guide (course 000149)
  2. Conservation Planning Modules 1-5 (course 000019)
  3. Introduction to Water Quality (course 000033)
  4. Air Quality Resource Concerns (course 000258)
  5. Air Quality, Climate Change and Energy (course 000253)
  6. Cultural Resources Modules 1-6 (course 000141)
  7. Environmental Compliance for Conservation Assistance - Level 1 (course 000190)
- Part 2 – (formal field course) Have satisfactorily completed Part 1 and:
  - Completed Michigan NRCS formal training courses required for the NRCS planning software and related tools
    1. Customer Service Toolkit (course number MI0230)
    2. MARI (course number MI0066)
    3. RUSLE 2 (course number MI0152)
    4. WEPS (Area Level course)
  - Participants should have a good working knowledge of conservation planning policy, the NPPH, and the FOTG and
  - Be capable of using current NRCS planning software and related tools (Toolkit, MARI, RUSLE 2, WEPS), and field data collection techniques (measuring slopes, pacing distances, etc)
- Part 3 – Have satisfactorily completed Part 1 & Part 2 above. Part 3 involves completing 3 conservation plans with supervision and completing one additional plan independently that includes conservation management units for at least two landuse types.

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**Duration:**

Part 1 – one to four weeks (self paced online course work and MI trainings courses)

Part 2 – one week (attend formal course)

Part 3 – within 1 year of completing Part 2 complete a minimum 3 plans for review by a Certified Conservation Planner, District Conservationist or ARC.

**Target Audience:** NRCS and conservation partnership employees providing conservation planning assistance to customers

**Expected Outcomes:**

The minimum conservation planning proficiency level expected of the participant at the end of the course is “4 – Apply Independently – can perform independently unless special problems are encountered; only a general check of work is required.”

**Resources needed by participants:**

Part 1 – eAuthentication Level 2 account, internet access to complete AgLearn courses

Part 2 – Clip board, paper and pencil, plant ID books, all weather field clothing, boots, tape measure and a clinometer for field exercises

Part 3 – Access to field office planning tools and software

**Outline for: Conservation Planning Course**

Overview of the Course & the Planning Process

Pre-planning activities

Phase I of the Planning Process (Understanding the Problems and Opportunities)

Case study farm description/discussion

Preplanning Classroom Exercise – Groups review preliminary case study handouts provided

Groups meet the "planning standards" for steps 1-4

Classroom Exercise "Determine Objectives"

Quality Criteria

Field Exercise – Phase I – Meet the farmer and completing a Resource Inventory

Documenting Phase I

Classroom Exercise – documenting Phase I

Phase II of the Planning Process (Understanding the Solutions)

Groups meet the "planning standards" for steps 5-6

Field Exercise – additional Resource Inventory and Engineering considerations

Classroom Exercise - Formulate & Evaluate Alternatives

Groups meet the “planning standard” for step 7

Documenting Phase II - Planned Systems, Plan Format & Content, Case files

Classroom Exercise – Groups complete case study plan

Group Presentations

Phase III of the Planning Process (Understanding the Results)

Course Wrap-up, Evaluations & Certification Requirements